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# THE PETSAMO REGION

ERIK R. v. KUEHNELT-LEDDEHN

THE Petsamo region, Finland's "corridor" to the open sea, was acquired in 1920 under the terms of the Treaty of Tartu (Dorpat). This region of some 4000 square miles, smaller than Connecticut, was better known then by the Russian name, Pechenga. The new name, Petsamo, is of Lapp origin; it was originally the Skolt name for Peattsám Fiord. When Russia agreed to the cession of the Petsamo region to Finland, its mineral resources were practically unknown and its population was less than 2000. The recent Soviet demands for its return have been prompted largely by economic and strategic motives, reinforced by the development of the harbors of Murmansk, Aleksandrovsk, and Kola on the Kola Peninsula.

To Finland acquisition of the region brought several advantages. Except for the mines of Outokumpu in the southeast, the principal mineral wealth of the country lies in the nickel and copper deposits of the Pitkäjärvi district. These ores,<sup>1</sup> containing about 1.6 per cent of nickel and 1.3 per cent of copper, are mined by the Petsamo Nickel Company<sup>2</sup> near the settlement of Kolosjoki. The ores are reached by an adit 3½ kilometers long. There are also deposits of galena and native sulphide of zinc in the coastal area,<sup>3</sup> but commercial mining had not started there, so far as we know, before the beginning of the Second World War. There is considerable fishing in the Barents Sea; in prewar years the catch averaged about 1½ million kilograms, mostly codfish; herring made up about 10–15 per cent of the total, though the amount fluctuated greatly. Cod-liver oil was processed in Liinahamari by the Petsamo Fish Oil Manufactory.<sup>4</sup> But of greater potential importance than either fishing or mining is geographical position—access to the Arctic Sea.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Risto Jurva's description of winter conditions along the Baltic coast of Finland<sup>5</sup> gives us a good picture of the difficulties besetting navigation there

<sup>1</sup> Pentlandite and chalcopyrite containing copper, and nickeliferous pyrrhotite containing nickel.

<sup>2</sup> Controlled financially by the Mond Nickel Company and certain Canadian interests.

<sup>3</sup> Largely around Peura Fiord and Aminoff Lake. Cf. H. Hausen: *Die Bleiglanz-Zinkblende-Lagerstätten an der Küste von Petsamo, Fennia*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 1932.

<sup>4</sup> The manager of this enterprise was General Wallenius, in retirement before the Second World War. He defended Petsamo and Lapland in the winter 1939–1940.

<sup>5</sup> Risto Jurva: *Über die Eisverhältnisse des Baltischen Meeres an den Küsten Finnlands, Fennia*, Vol. 64, No. 1, 1937 (with atlas). See note in the *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 29, 1939, p. 142.



FIG. 1—The Petsamo region in relation to Finland as a whole and neighboring countries. Reproduced, with minor changes, from "Petsamo-Kola, the Northern Finno-Russian Frontier Region," *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 30, 1940, pp. 149-152. For the boundary changes of 1940 see Figure 3 in W. R. Mead: Finland in the Sixteenth Century, *ibid.*, pp. 400-411.

during the cold season. Only the Hanko (Hangö) peninsula remains fairly ice-free, and that is the territory Russia demanded and received in March, 1940. In the severer winters the bus lines of Helsinki (Helsingfors) are extended to the islands in the harbor. The Åland Islands (Åhvenanmaa) are connected with the mainland by a solid bridge of ice but remain separated from Sweden by a stretch of open water.

But although ice masses floating and firm isolate the larger part of Finland in the winter, the coast of the Barents Sea from the North Cape to the eastern Kola Peninsula is always ice-free, a result of the warm Atlantic drift. On the Russian side, Murmansk owes its importance to this phenomenon, and Uinahamari ( $69^{\circ} 38' N.$ ) and its Russian and Norwegian neighbors—the latitudes are roughly those of Point Barrow, Alaska, and northern Baffin Island—are among the northernmost winter harbors in the world. The situation of Petsamo is further significant in that it lies closer to the United States than the better-known harbors of southern Finland, Turku (Åbo), Helsinki, Viipuri (Viborg). The hemispherical maps with the North Pole as a center, now so popular as indicators of shortest aerial distances, bring out this fact even more clearly. Beyond the North Cape it is almost straight sailing to the St. Lawrence and Boston, whereas the route from southern Finland to America is very devious in its first third.

On the other hand, the Petsamo region is remote from the southern,

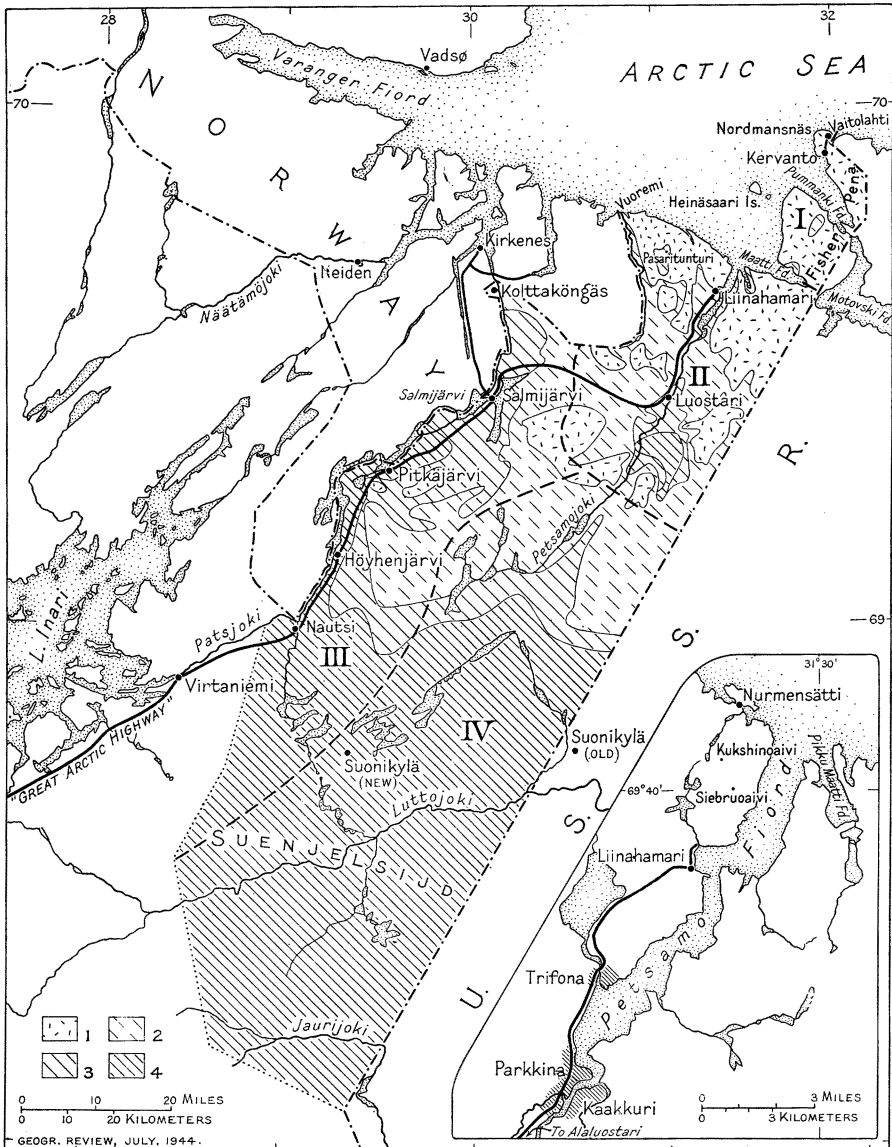


FIG. 2—The Petsamo region. The shading shows a vegetational classification: 1, tundra; 2, birch scrub with some larger growth; 3, transition zone of birch and pine; 4, coniferous forest (after Aario, see footnote 8). The Roman numerals refer to natural regions: I, western Fisher Peninsula; II, Petsamo Fjord (see inset for details) and adjacent coasts and hinterland; III, western region tributary to the Patsjoki; IV, Suenjelsijid, the most inaccessible part of Petsamo, draining chiefly to Soviet territory. Scale 1 : 1,600,000.

populous part of Finland. By the shortest route Liinahamari is exactly 1000 miles from Helsinki. Soon after the annexation the government extended

the Rovaniemi-Ivalo road to Petsamo Fiord. Rovaniemi itself is connected with the south by rail as well as by road. There are several reasons why the railroad was not extended farther north. The Imperial Russian Government, which constructed the Murmansk railroad in 1914-1917, was able to use as workers German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war; the mortality was great, but so was the reservoir. Finland did not possess so cheap a source of labor. Nor would a railroad to the Arctic Sea be of such strategic value for Finland as the Murmansk railroad is for Russia; the narrow Petsamo region could always be quickly cut by the enemy. And since the great masses of consumers are concentrated on the southern seaboard, the detour by the Baltic is still more profitable in peacetime for American or America-bound skippers. During my several sojourns in Finland I heard popular protests voiced against the building of a railroad from Rovaniemi to the sea; fears were repeatedly expressed that the northern wilderness would be spoiled. The Finns are without doubt one of the most nature-conscious peoples in the world.

But the value of Finnish Lapland and Petsamo as regards international communications should not be underestimated. The Russians themselves in the peace treaty of March, 1940, pressed the Finns to extend the Rovaniemi-Kemijärvi railroad to the Soviet border, whence a continuation was planned by the U.S.S.R. to the White Sea harbor of Kandalaksha. The steadily increasing population and commercial value of the Finnish North<sup>6</sup> may force a decision contrary to the wishes of the friends of Lapp solitude. Between September and December, 1939, and again between the summers of 1940 and 1941 Liinahamari served as an important "emergency exit" for Allied citizens, who traveled through the then neutral Finnish state. Even after the renewal of hostilities against Russia in June, 1941, the Finns received mail and provisions via Petsamo and kept the whole length of the Great Arctic Highway open.<sup>7</sup>

#### A SUB-ARCTIC LAND

If the northernness of the Petsamo region is not indicated by its ice-free harbors, other characteristics do not permit us to forget that this region reaches almost to the 70th parallel. The midnight sun is visible in Vaitolahti from May 17 until July 28, and continuous darkness reigns from November

<sup>6</sup> Lapland was made an independent province (Lapin lääni) on January 1, 1938; until that date it was part of Oulu (Uleåborg) Province.

<sup>7</sup> The Kaunispää and Kuvernöörinkoski heights in Petsamo are especially difficult to keep free of snow and snowdrifts. In normal times the road was kept open in winter as far as Sodankylä. The sledge trip from Sodankylä to Petsamo took about 6-10 days according to the weather.

27 until January 18. Barley, in small quantities, grows only in the southernmost part of Petsamo; the only crop on the rare patches of humus in the coastal area is the potato. Most of the coastal area, including the Fisher Peninsula (Kalastajasaarento), is tundra interrupted by the naked rock of low *tunturis* (bald mountains). Glacial drift covers most of the surface, as it does in the rest of northern and central Finland. The characteristic plant cover of the tundra is moss and lichen (*jäkälä*), the staple food of the wild (*peura*) and tame (*porro*) reindeer and in winter even a food, eaten raw, of some of the natives. In central Petsamo we find birch scrub (*tunturikoivikko*) interspersed with birch trees, farther south a transition zone consisting mainly of birch and pine, and finally the conifer forest proper.<sup>8</sup> Spruce is less plentiful, but in Petsamo the spruce wins the northward race over the pine, a situation not duplicated on the Norwegian coast. Berries are abundant; the blaeberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), the cowberry (*V. vitis-idaea*), and the crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) may be mentioned. There is also the cloud-berry, *lakka* (*Rubus chamaemorus*), which is red in its earlier stage but ripens to a greenish yellow. It serves not only as a food but also as basis for a cordial. The great cold of the Petsamo winter makes strong drinks popular; in fact, the world's strongest drink is said to be the Finnish *karhu* (bear).

The February and July temperatures of Petsamo show characteristics common to all water-modified areas. The February average of Vaitolahti, on the coast, is  $-6^{\circ}$  C.; inland (Finnish) Suonikylä has  $-13^{\circ}$  C. The coldest area in Lapland is that west of Lake Inari, which has a February average of  $-15^{\circ}$  C. Conversely, Vaitolahti has a July average of  $9^{\circ}$  C., and Suonikylä nearly  $12^{\circ}$  C. Precipitation is small and falls chiefly in the summer.

The fauna of the region is sub-Arctic. The reindeer has already been mentioned; the polar fox and the polar hare have been seen occasionally; the polar bear, however, is unknown. The brown bear is hunted in winter by Lapps on skis, who club the exhausted animal to death; but when suddenly awakened from his winter sleep, the bear can be a formidable enemy. Tamed bears are not rare in Lapland.<sup>9</sup> The number of sub-Arctic birds is enormous. The Heinäsaari Islands enjoy the status of bird sanctuaries, and protection has been extended to the shore of the Fisher Peninsula

<sup>8</sup> Compare the map in Leo Aario: Waldgrenzen und subrezente Pollenspektren in Petsamo, Lappland, *Publs. Inst. Geogr. Univ. Helsingiensis* No. 3, Helsinki, 1940. The vegetation zones in Figure 2, are based on this map.

<sup>9</sup> A farmer in Kuusamo had a fully grown bear that was as tame as a dog.

It is interesting to note that the Lapps themselves believe that a bear will never attack a woman. Pursued by a bear, a Lapp will, as a last resort, lower his coat in imitation of a skirt. Like the American Indian, he believes that the bear is a human being transformed by magic.



between Maatti and Pummanki Fiords. A great variety of puffins, terns, and sea gulls<sup>10</sup> are found here, and the visitor must be careful not to stumble into their burrows excavated in the soft ground or to crush their numerous eggs. Since these birds can fly only when they are fairly well grown, they can be easily caught.

Of domestic animals, a small number of cattle are bred by natives as well as by colonists. The rare patches of grass are guarded like precious jewels, for hay in these latitudes is scarce. The cows and oxen I have seen, however, have been rather sickly-looking animals. Finnish and Soviet Vaitolahti (Vayda-Guba) had one bull in common, which strayed indifferently across the forbidden border.<sup>11</sup>

Under the morainic cover the greater part of the Petsamo region consists of gneissic granite and granulite. In the center some andesite is found, and post-Bothnian granite prevails in the region of Kolttaköngäs. The Finnish part of the Fisher Peninsula shows greater geological variation than the mainland, with Paleozoic sandstone, a belt of anorthosite at the head of Pummanki Fiord, and Paleozoic schists in the Vaitolahti-Kervanto region. The least-known area is the Suenjelsjyd. The first geodetic and geological investigations there were made at the time of the demarcation of the Finno-Soviet border in 1921.<sup>12</sup> The discovery of commercially valuable ores gave new impetus to further methodical investigation, until it was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE PEOPLE OF PETSAMO: THE SKOLTS

The first census, on December 31, 1926, showed a total of 1905 inhabitants in Petsamo. Four years later, 2307 persons were counted; in 1935 the number had risen to 3226; in 1937 to 3382; and in 1938 to 4288, an influx due mostly to mining activities. At the time of the outbreak of the present war Petsamo must have had a population of slightly more than 5000.<sup>14</sup> In 1938 there were 2354 men and 1934 women—a typical “frontier”

<sup>10</sup> The smaller sea gull is called onomatopoeically *kaja* (pron.: káyyah), the larger one *pormestari* (burgomaster).

<sup>11</sup> A small settlement on Motovski Fiord, in the Soviet part of the Fisher Peninsula, bears the expressive name of Tri Korovy (Three Cows).

<sup>12</sup> This work has been interestingly described by Ilmari Bonsdorff and Alfred A. Gustafsson in “Valtakunnan rajankäynti Petsamossa v. 1921,” *Fennia*, Vol. 47, No. 13, 1927.

<sup>13</sup> The discovery of large apatite deposits at Kirovsk in western Soviet Kola acted as a further incentive for a methodical geological survey. There is also still a hope that iron ore may be found in the part of Petsamo near the ore deposits of Kirkenes in Norway.

<sup>14</sup> These statistics are taken from *Suomen Virallinen Tilasto*, VI: *Väestötilasto*, No. 83, 1935, Helsinki, 1936, and *Suomen Tilastollinen Vuosikirja* (*Annuaire Statistique de Finlande*), Vol. 37 (N.S.), 1939, Helsinki, 1940.

composition. It should be noted that the increase in population and industry created a certain disquiet in Norway; so did the constant stream of Finnish immigrants into the Norwegian towns near the border—Kirkenes, Vadsø, Vardø, and others.<sup>15</sup> In 1935 a Norwegian newspaper wrote with a great deal of exaggeration about “our Norwegian East Prussia,” meaning the Varanger Fiord region.

The original inhabitants of Petsamo were the Skolts (Skoltjes, Koltta-Lapps), in all probability close relatives of the migratory Lapps of Finland, Norway, and Sweden, who until the imperial Russian edict of 1905 were able to migrate freely between Narvik and the eastern tip of the Kola Peninsula.<sup>16</sup> The Skolts, however, are not migratory, with the exception of the Suenjelsijd Skolts, who are seminomadic<sup>17</sup> and practice reindeer breeding. The demarcation of the unique straight-line boundary of the Tartu treaty<sup>18</sup> left the winter village of these Skolts, Suonikylä, in Soviet territory, and the Finnish government helped them to build new winter quarters. They have a school organized on a boarding basis, since the parents leave with their herds before “commencement.” The old tribal judiciary organization of the *norraz* has been kept intact. Like their sedentary brethren on the coast, these Lapps belong to the Greek Orthodox Church. Pagan superstitions are common among them, however, as among the nominally Lutheran Lapps of the west, and they are addicted to the practice of witchcraft. Certain Russian cultural influences have made themselves felt on all Skolts. Russian baptismal and family names as well as patronymics, once very common, have been yielding more recently to Finnicizing tendencies.

The coastal Skolts, thirty years ago exposed even more strongly to the process of Russification, are today rapidly becoming Finnish. I was able to talk Russian with the older Lapps around the outer Petsamo Fiord, who spoke this language with surprising fluency. The Lapps, indeed, are famous for their linguistic proficiency; their intelligence and native wisdom find general praise. However, the Lappish grammar and vocabulary are a great deal more akin to Finnish than to Russian, and the new transition is accordingly very rapid. Religion has hardly proved an obstacle, since the Finnish government has done everything within its power to de-Russianize the

<sup>15</sup> The Norwegians call the Finns *Kvaener* but the Lapps *Finner*. The confusion of *kvaener* with *kvinder* (women) by foreigners led to the belief that northern Norway harbored a Lappish (*finsk*) tribe whose women looked like men. This sixteenth-century error has happily been cleared up.

<sup>16</sup> Compare the brilliant and exhaustive study of Väinö Tanner, “Antropogeografiska studier inom Petsamo-området, I: Skolt-lapparna,” *Fennia*, Vol. 49, No. 4, 1929. Tanner is the outstanding authority on Petsamo, on which he has published numerous geological and anthropological studies.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Karl Nickul: *Eräs Petsamokysymys*, *Terra*, Vol. 47, 1935, pp. 81–107.

<sup>18</sup> Nine-tenths of this boundary line is entirely straight, the only line of this kind in all Europe.



Greek Orthodox seminaries. At least 80 per cent of the Greek Orthodox citizens of Finland are Karelians—Finns who are either natives of the extreme east of Finland or refugees from Soviet Karelia. The Greek Orthodox priest of Parkkina, for instance, was ethnically a Finn; with his shaved jaw and his sporting clothes he hardly looked like a Russian *pop*. To find something of a Russian atmosphere in this border region, one had to visit the bearded monks of the monastery of Yläluostari, at the foot of the Pelastusvuori Mountain (Spasitelnaya), or the small Skolt huts at Nurmensätti, all adorned with the triple cross.

The truly Lapp cultural heritage of the coastal Skolts is even smaller than that of the Suonikylä Skolts. They have no reindeer<sup>19</sup> and do not eat the inner linings of bark; they breed cattle and engage in a small amount of commercial fishing. Their clothing, once totally Russianized, is now Westernized; the traditional “four winds” cap is unknown among them, and so are the widely popular knives and other objects made of reindeer bone.

#### RUSSIANS AND FINNS

Besides 11 Zyrians (Komi) from the extreme northeast of European Russia, there were 217 Russians and 311 Finno-Karelians in Petsamo in 1926. The Russians seemed to be happy to lead a bourgeois existence, and the Karelians, in spite of their Eastern faith, greeted the Finns as blood brothers. It must be remembered that the Karelians are the real colonizers of the coast of the White Sea and the Arctic Sea. Most of the *Kvaener* of Norway are Karelians, who are also, in a way, the most “archaic” Finns. The famous “Kalevala” is an (East) Karelian epic. Kaakkuri on Petsamo Fiord, Parkkina, Pummanki, Kervanto, and Vaitolahti are Karelian settlements. Maattivuono is an exception; it is inhabited by Skolts.

The Russian element consisted of a few officials and the monks of Yläluostari. Some of them are still able to converse in *norskrusk*, the fantastic jargon of the Murman Coast, a mixture of Norwegian, Russian, and Lapp words. In Alaluostari, once the seat of a monastery and a Greek Orthodox (today converted into Lutheran) church, still stands a bell tower dedicated to St. Trifon by the merchants of Archangel, the old metropolis of the Russian North, now eclipsed by Murmansk.<sup>20</sup> In the old days Petsamo Fiord, with the relics of the highly venerated saint, was in effect a place of

<sup>19</sup> Larger reindeer herds have a cash value of \$2000 to \$10,000. Reindeer meat, eaten all over Petsamo, is dark and savory. Some of the migratory Lapps have handsome banking accounts and own real estate. It is my impression that the migratory Lapps are materially better off than the Skolts.

<sup>20</sup> According to latest reports, the population of Murmansk has passed the 100,000 mark.

pilgrimage for the Pravoslavs (i.e. Greek Orthodox). The Petsamo region was for centuries the northern "melting pot" of European civilization; here met the semi-Asiatic Muscovy, the Atlantic realm of the Danish-Norwegian king, and the Finnish possessions of the Swedish domain. In the sixteenth century the Finnish leader Pekka Vesänen in the service of His Swedish Majesty marched into the Petsamo region and burned the monastery of Yläluostari to the ground.

The Finns themselves were, until the outbreak of the Second World War, a rapidly increasing element in Petsamo. Into this frontier country came doctors, geologists, engineers, soldiers, customs officials, nurses, ministers, and merchants. Most of these settlers were of the best stock, hardy and enduring, healthy and energetic. The winter, with its two months of darkness,<sup>21</sup> the snow present from the end of September to early June, the northwesterners dousing the gray rocks with cold rain make life none too pleasant. Yet Petsamo, like the rest of Lapland, has a curious attraction for these people from the south: Finnish officials notified of a transfer to Lapland may view the prospect with dismay, their wives still more so; but the country gets "under the skin," and after a few years north of the Arctic Circle they will fight to remain.

Not all Finnish colonists, however, learn to take the winter in their stride. It is incredible how one gets used to the midnight sun in summer. Nothing else is as depressing as a trip south in late July when one has lost all sense of time and all memory of the night. A feeling of melancholy and physical oppression, a sudden presentment of blindness and death, seizes the traveler as he watches the conductor putting on the lights of the car rumbling monotonously through the dark forests. There is, of course, no such abrupt change in the Petsamo region. The sun disappears for the first time below the horizon at the end of July, but only toward the end of August does darkness prevail over the white nights and descend on the *tunturis*. It is a slow and insidious approach. A certain despondency and nervousness and shortness of temper is likely to set in among the colonists—the "Petsamo blues." When once the Arctic night has settled inexorably over the land, the occupied dwellers calm down somewhat. The darkness is by no means impenetrable, and a great deal of hunting is done. In the clear air the moon seems larger and brighter than in lower latitudes, and the reflection from the snow adds to the visibility of the trails. The Finns

<sup>21</sup> The mental effects of the long winter darkness are still a matter of discussion. Idiots in the far north seem to be more numerous than in the south; the observant traveler is struck by the frequency of cretins even in Swedish Lapland.

are good ski runners, and in international competition they have beaten all other nations in *Langlauf* (running with skis on level ground). The aurora borealis (*revontuli*), beautiful at first, is less pleasing upon longer acquaintance; its vibrating and oscillating play adds to the nervous instability. Drinking, card playing, the recital of poetry, and reading are the chief indoor pastimes.

### THE GREAT ARCTIC HIGHWAY<sup>22</sup>

This strategically and economically important road begins at Rovaniemi in the shadow of the round towers of the modernistic Pohjanhovi Hotel and runs 340 miles to Liinahamari. From the administrative center of Finnish Lapland to Vuotso the mail bus rolls through endless state forests, where the traveler witnesses the gradual conquest of trees by a sub-Arctic climate. At Sodankylä, about halfway between Rovaniemi and Lake Inari, the mercury is known to have frozen in the thermometer—its Hotel Polaris is well named! Vuotso was the customs station for goods going from duty-free Lapland to southern Finland. Beyond Vuotso the trees give up the struggle temporarily. The few hundred yards of ascent to the Kaunispää saddle eliminates the evergreens and birches; they reappear, however, in the Ivalo region. Here we are very near Lake Inari (Enare), one of the largest lakes (nearly 400 square miles) of the continent. Clouds of mosquitoes and horseflies remind one of Alaska and the Yukon.

The road here takes a northeasterly turn and keeps near to the Patsjoki for a considerable stretch. Where Lake Inari flows into the Patsjoki, the water is studded with a multitude of small islands and offers excellent fishing. Near Nautsi we enter the Petsamo region proper. The Patsjoki flows in numerous falls and cataracts, a potential source of considerable hydroelectric power. Höyhenjärvi and Pitkäjärvi are small settlements along lakelike broadenings of the river. Salmijärvi is the junction for a road to Koltta-köngäs (the Russian Boris-Gleb), whence a short trip on the Patsjoki can be made to Kirkenes, in Norway. Although Kirkenes (Finnish, Kirkkonieni) belongs geographically to Finland and has a high percentage of *Kvaener*, it is distinctly Norwegian in character. The small, boxlike houses clustered on the rock radiant in all the colors under the sun are anything but "Baltic" in appearance. Polish steamers disgorging coal from Upper Silesia for the iron smelters used to be a frequent sight in the harbor. There is an air of gaiety about this lively little place that is in contrast with the general somberness of the Petsamo region. From Salmijärvi and from

<sup>22</sup> For details see "Lapland: Short Guide for Tourists," Finnish Tourist Association, Helsinki, 1938.

Pitkäjärvi the mines of the Kaulatunturi can be reached. Salmijärvi has a general store and other "metropolitan" attractions.

After leaving Salmijärvi the road climbs up to Haukilampi and Kuvernöörinkoski. The trees succumb here for a second time, to reappear near Yläluostari. Behind Yläluostari is the large Skolt village of Moskova. But Yläluostari with its monastery is a dream of Old Russia, not of czarist pomp and glory, but a page from a Russian fairy story. The monastery, unlike its counterparts in Käkisalme and Valamo, is of great simplicity and poverty. It was originally founded during the Tartar domination of Russia by monks fleeing the Asiatic terror. The incumbents, with their otherworldly eyes, their unkempt locks and shabby black clothes, are true symbols of Greek Orthodox sanctity. Most of them were born in the territory of the Soviet Union; and since new novices have not been forthcoming, their number has constantly decreased. There seems to be no bridge between them and the "progressive," matter-of-fact inhabitants of the Finnish Republic.<sup>23</sup>

The Petsamonjoki passes Yläluostari in great winding curves. At the point where the river enters the fiord the settlement of Alaluostari is situated. Alaluostari<sup>24</sup> (Lower Convent), with its Lutheran church, has already been mentioned. The largest house is the residence of the minister.<sup>25</sup> It should be emphasized that there is no village or township called Petsamo, though such a place is shown in most British and American atlases. On the east side of Petsamo Fiord there is only one settlement, Kaakkuri, inhabited by Karelians. On the west shore is Alaluostari, which boasts a Lutheran church, a meteorological station, and a post office, which also handles telegrams. A few miles farther north is Parkkina, with a general store, a bank, a Greek Orthodox priest, a doctor, and a two-room hospital; a couple of miles farther on is Trifona, with a Norwegian consul, a chapel, a small store, and an old tourist inn. Liinahamari is the terminus of the Great Arctic Highway. It has a large tourist hotel, a factory, a post office, and a deep-sea harbor. At Parkkina the fiord is still narrow, and the brown color of the banks indicates their humus cover. At Liinahamari gray hues come to the fore; the fiord broadens to the size of a bay, and the grim hills of the Arctic

<sup>23</sup> As an odd reminder of the aftermath of the First World War there is in the cemetery of Yläluostari the grave of a Scottish soldier, killed in action during the Murmansk expedition.

<sup>24</sup> *Luostari* (monastery, convent) is derived from "cloister."

<sup>25</sup> Until the outbreak of the Second World War, Kirkkoherra Eliel Auno was minister. Although born and bred below the Arctic Circle, he was deeply attached to his adopted home. His rectory and church were burned to ashes in the war of 1939-1940. This "backwoods preacher" had a wonderful library, with some of the best theological books of all countries and creeds.

shores, the Siebruoaiivi, the Kukshinoaivi, the Pasaritunturi, are visible. Salty breezes keep the mosquitoes away, and the sharp cries of the sea gulls announce that we have almost reached the rim of the land world.

### THE FISHER PENINSULA

This feeling of the end of the world is even stronger on the Fisher Peninsula. Twice a week a small but clean steamer leaves for its desolate hamlets and also touches the Heinäsaari Islands. Out in the Barents Sea the impression of grayness becomes still more pervasive—gray sky, gray water, gray rocks, gray birds, a world formless and void. Maattivuono and Pummanki are poor settlements; so is Kervanto.<sup>26</sup> The ship usually makes a wide curve when entering the harbor of Vaitolahti, because its cliffs are a danger to navigation, as derelicts on both the Soviet and Finnish sides testify.

Before 1939 Vaitolahti was one of the oddest places in the world. The boundary of 1920 bisected the village into Finnish and Soviet parts. Communication between the two was legally prohibited, but the inhabitants, often closely related to one another, met nevertheless during the Arctic night and even in the summer while fishing on the high sea. The armed guard on the Soviet side saw to it that nobody violated the border or talked to “aliens” across the short stretch of barbed wire. The Finnish authorities thoroughly cross-questioned tourists who crossed from the Soviet side in less guarded spots. My own efforts to start a conversation in Finnish or Russian were abortive. The infrangibility of this border is illustrated by the difficulties of another means of communication. If an inhabitant of Finnish Vaitolahti wanted to phone to his cousin on the other side, his voice could be carried at very great expense about 2600 miles via Rovaniemi, Helsinki, Leningrad, and Petrozavodsk to a house only 200 yards from his own! A “liberal” attitude was nevertheless manifested by the Finns, who left the use of the whole pier to the dwellers of Soviet Vaitolahti, though its tip was in Finnish territorial waters. Theoretically, the Finns could land on the west end and stand there, but nobody ever tried it.

In the evening one could hear the soldiers of the border watch sing in their beautiful Russian voices; nostalgic songs of the Ukraine carried over to Finnish Vaitolahti. I remember hearing them on one occasion while

<sup>26</sup> All detailed maps show an automobile road(!) between Vaitolahti and Kervanto. This geographical oddity is due to the fact that a settler actually transported his car to Kervanto but was able to use it only on the graded track to Vaitolahti; hence the appearance of an “automobile road” due solely to the whim of one man.

walking with a Finnish architect friend to the new school built halfway between Vaitolahti and Kervanto; he was going to show me the large basement dormitory for use of the pupils when snowbound. Stumbling over the tundra in my Lapp boots and keeping to the right side of the warning notice "Raja, Gräns, Border, Die Grenze," I caught a few fragments. When we left the solid building the far-away song died down, and we heard nothing but the wind and its melancholy whistle in the telephone wires leading to Nordmansnäs. Finally we stood on the black igneous cliffs, against which the sea was pounding furiously. To the west the steep walls of Vuoremi were just visible behind a slate-colored curtain of rain; in front was nothing but the desert of the Arctic Sea. We were on the very rim of our Old World.

The attachment of the Finns to Petsamo transcends economic motives. Since independence was secured, a new "bi-oceanic feeling" has sprung up in Finland as a result of the acquisition of Petsamo; but there has also developed a deep love for this sub-Arctic stretch of frontier, a sentiment nobly expressed in the poems of Uno Kailas,<sup>27</sup> the bard of Petsamo, and in the Petsamo hymn ("Petsamon laulu"). It would be a crushing blow to the Finns if all the work for Petsamo were to be in vain, now that the fruit of their labor has just begun to ripen. *Kun talo on valmis tulee kuolema*, says a Finnish proverb. "Once the homestead is ready, death comes." Let us hope that fate will deal more kindly with Finland's northern homestead.

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<sup>27</sup> Born in 1901, died of consumption at the age of 32 in Nice, France.